

Elizabeth Dunbar, Minnesota Public Radio

St. Paul, Minn. - U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., on Tuesday defended congressional earmarks, saying limits have been put in place and that the money spent on them represents only a small part of the overall federal budget.

Republican House leaders have called for a moratorium on the earmark process, which allows members of Congress to fund specific projects in their states or districts. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky, has said he also supports a ban on earmarks.

But McCollum said she's concerned about the \$45 million earmark pending before the House for the Central Corridor light rail project. She said the project is worthwhile and will create thousands of jobs.

"[Earmarks are] one half of one percent of the entire federal budget," McCollum told MPR's Morning Edition. "This is for local communities. I'm a big supporter of local control, especially when it comes to spending some of our tax dollars."

McCollum said she is working with the Obama administration to save Central Corridor from Republican cuts.

While the light rail project is a priority, McCollum said there are other earmarks she's supported in past years, such as money for the Harriet Tubman crisis centers in the Twin Cities.

"That's a community project that the community came together and said, 'Would you help us fund this,'" she said.

[Full interview on Morning Edition.](#)